



7/26/78 11B July 26 R  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520

AR155

July 26, 1978

Dear Senator Church:

The information you have regarding the Argentine "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" is correct. I had the honor of meeting with representatives of this very courageous group when I was in Argentina and again when a delegation visited the United States. The group, which started with a few brave women, has grown and its membership is now estimated at about three hundred. The women who make it up meet every week in the Plazo de Mayo by the Ministry of Interior and Presidential Palace to demonstrate their desire for information on the welfare and whereabouts of their loved ones who have disappeared, presumably at the hands of security forces, or are believed to be held without charge by the current Argentine Government.

In December 1977, two French nuns and five mothers who had been gathering regularly at the Plaza to protest the detention and disappearances of their loved ones, were themselves detained, apparently by security forces. The Government of Argentina denied knowledge of their whereabouts despite strong indications that security forces had abducted them. After several months without any word, their bodies were reported by human rights groups to have been discovered washed ashore on the Argentine coast. Six other mothers were also abducted and are presumed to be dead.

As you may be aware, our current relations with Argentina are severely strained because of the continuing serious human rights problems in that country. In the

The Honorable  
Frank Church,  
United States Senate.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ( ) In Part ( ) In Full

( ) Classify as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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almost innumerable representations we have made on the human rights situation, the demands of the "mothers" and the harassment and abuse members of their group have suffered has been emphasized. The experiences of this group reflect the core of the problem in Argentina, the failure of the Government to be accountable to its people and to govern by due process and constitutionally recognized by law. This is the case despite the fact that the Government of Argentina has recognized that the terrorism which led to the suspension of legal norms is now under control.

We have tried in many ways to convince the Argentine Government of the need for change. We have made it clear that improvement in our relations is dependent on change. We have sent many high level delegations to Argentina, including one headed by the Secretary of State and another by the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. I accompanied the Secretary and undertook two separate missions on my own. We have encouraged other governments to make their concerns known to the Government of Argentina. We have addressed Argentine human rights issues in international fora and urged the Argentine Government to accept a visit by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. We have stopped military aid and training and few new military transfers have been approved. We are opposing loans to Argentina in the multilateral development banks, and the Export-Import Bank, in accordance with the State Department's advice, has recently declined to participate in a major business transaction in Argentina.

We hope that our continued underscoring of the major importance of human rights to our foreign relations, will influence the Government of Argentina to bring about substantive improvements. I welcome your support in this effort and would be happy to consult with you in person if you would find it useful.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia M. Derian  
Assistant Secretary for  
Human Rights and  
Humanitarian Affairs

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DRAFTER:HA/HR:M. Bova: *mb* jr:07/25/78

CLEARANCE:ARA/ECA:J. Bumpus *JB*  
HA/HR:C. Salmon *CS*